

According to the proposals of the Allies at Frankfort,<sup>1</sup> Germany, Italy, and Spain were to be entirely withdrawn from the dominion of France. England recognized the freedom of trade and navigation, and there appeared no reason to doubt the sincerity of her professed willingness to make great sacrifices to promote the object proposed by the Allies. But to these offers a fatal condition was added, namely, that the Congress should meet in a town, to be declared neutral, on the right bank of the Rhine, where the plenipotentiaries of all the belligerent powers were to assemble; *but the course of the war was not to be impeded by these negotiations?*

The Due de Bassano (Maret), who was still Minister for Foreign Affairs, replied, by order of Napoleon, to the overtures made by the Allies for a general Congress; and stated that the Emperor acceded to them, and wished Mannheim to be chosen as the neutral town. M. Metternich replied in a note, dated Frankfort, the 25th of November, stating that the Allies felt no difficulty in acceding to Napoleon's choice of Mannheim for the meeting of the Congress; but as M. de Bassano's letter contained no mention of the general and summary bases I have just mentioned, and which had been communicated to M. de St. Aignan at Frankfort, M. Metternich stated that the Allies wished the Emperor Napoleon to

<sup>1</sup> The proceedings at Frankfort should be read in *Metternich*, vol. i. pp. 212-220, where Metternich speaks of the difficulty in getting the Allies to act together. "The Russian army remained quiet and thought its object gained. If Marshal Kutusow had been still living it would not have left the Oder." So much is often said as to the bad faith of Napoleon in these negotiations that one of Metternich's statements should be noted. "I proposed further to join with the idea of natural boundaries the offer of an immediate negotiation. As the Emperor Francis sanctioned my intention I laid it before their Majesties of Kussia and Prussia. Both of them feared that Napoleon, trusting to the chances of the future, might by accepting the proposal with quick and energetic decision put an end to the affair" (*Metternich*, vol. i. p. 214). The "affair" means here the war. The whole of Metternich's account is inconsistent with good faith in the Allies' proposals, and shows that Napoleon's remark on the proclamation was correct. "No one but Metternich can have concocted this document; talking of the Rhine, the Alps, and the Pyrenees is a thorough piece of cunning. It could only enter into the head of a man who knows France as well as he does" (*Metternich*, vol. i. p. 215).

<sup>2</sup> This system of negotiating and advancing was a realization of Metternich's idea of copying Napoleon's own former procedure. "Let us hold always the sword in one hand, and the olive branch in the other; always ready to negotiate, but only negotiating whilst advancing. Here is Napoleon's system: may he find enemies who will carry on war . . . as he would carry it on himself" (Metternich to Stadion, April, 1809, *Metternich*, vol. ii p. 346).